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If the Low Power FM Service is allowed to evolve, without the heavy hand of FCC regulatory bureaucracy bearing down, an exciting new era in broadcasting is just around the corner. A future of an increase of independent program choices and diverse ownership will contrast with today's "vast wasteland". Today indeed, with the exception of digital technology, regulated radio broadcasting is stuck in the muck of a bottom-line feeding broadcasting culture. The most successful claim to appeal to the lowest common denominator. The formula driven, centralized, mega-ownership leaves little room the radio pioneer spirit of the past. In most cases the decision making process in radio broadcasting is cloistered in the cooperate boardroom with non-broadcasters calling the shots. Over the years we have converted from devoted broadcasters of the past to the property speculators of today, Arthur Godfrey to today's Jerry Springer, this is what broadcasting has become. Can FCC Commissioners call this a positive evolutionary trend? The FCC has in recent years consistently nurtured a bottom feeding marketplace mindset where in the next century all that will survive will be the sharks of the industry. Certainly someone at the FCC can point out this loss of past pride and greatness.

The only major new broadcasting excitement, apart from the technical aspects of recent digital expansion, is out side of FCC control, on Internet radio. There you will find a radio broadcast industry rapidly expanding and with only slight limitations by the self-regulation imposed by the web site owners. There one can find a truly exciting new frontier in radio without the heavy hand of the bureaucracy smothering development. For those with a computer the program choices will boggle the mind. Any language, any music and a vast diversity of political viewpoints are instantly available. This discourse in now available in markets that heretofore had only very limited plebian choices. Just think, I can even listen on the Internet to Rush Limbaugh or G. Gordon Liddy. These are radio program choices that are normally denied to people in the Virgin Islands because the dominant media gurus don't feel we shouldn't be allowed to hear that kind of radio here. Now, however, Internet radio removes these limitations and both programs are in fact heard locally on the Internet. Millions now who work behind computers are tuning in. Sometimes there a few other choices as attempting to tune in a distant station in a office building with computers nearby allows only the strongest AM stations to piece the

electronic interference fog. Even that station may have a constant whistle (heterodyne). No so on Internet Radio where if you are connected there are thousands of radio choices while you work.

A proliferation of LPFM and LPAM stations would create opportunities for a refreshed crossroads of ideas now available to the broadcast listener. LPFM would create a more metropolitan atmosphere on the spectrum by offering in small and rural markets a greater and more diverse selection of program choice. The instant success of Internet radio should be a great guide to those at the Commission who will ultimately decide the LPFM rules and policy. Internet radio has broken down barriers. LPFM can have a similar impact.

For decades the FCC has placed an abundance of force on the issue of broadcasting diversity, both in hiring and in program choices. Despite the rulings of the Federal Courts questioning broadcastings race based criteria for hiring and licensing practices the Commission still is not willing to accept some of the blame for failed policy. The radio listener today, rather than having more program choices, has actually less. LPFM can change all of this. It could bring back true local radio. It can provide the program and ownership diversity in radio broadcasting of the goals of the Commission that for so many years has been actually diminishing.

Let me conclude by providing a local sample that may parallel other similar situations. I live on St. Croix, an island in the Eastern Caribbean. Across the FM radio spectrum there are a few actual choices. We have 3 stations, WJKC, WMNN, and WVIQ, with common ownership and with formula driven automated contemporary music formats. Until last month St. Croix did not have a Spanish language or Latin format even though over 30 per cent of the population has their roots in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. WAVI has entered that market. WVIS has been off the air since 1995 except for a few days to supply the Commission's requirements to keep the license. A similar tale exists with WSTX-FM. If you call them on the telephone they claim to be on the air from their AM studio with only a few watts simulcasting their AM programming. This condition also has existed since 1995.

Accordingly, few program choices exist in this market on broadcast FM. Several stations holding licenses have not returned to any meaningful operation. LPFM could change all that. There are virtually unlimited sources of programming available to an LPFM site via the Internet. Broadcast rights are easy to obtain and very inexpensive, if not free, or on a coop basis from most of the Internet radio sources.

LPFM would challenge innovation and bring new concepts to the industry. Here is an example. In the past ten years we have had periods when the islands have been cut off from the outside world, no telephones, no local radio stations on the air due to severe hurricanes that have damaged the islands. Although my duty station as a government employee was at the local EOC headquarters I was dispatched by authorities to assist in restoring stations so the general public could receive disaster relief information. If I had available a single LPFM station at the EOC during these emergencies I could have rebroadcast vital life saving information including NOAA

**transmissions from Puerto Rico with the specialized VHF receiving equipment and retransmitted urgent information to the general population regarding the disaster recovery. Additionally a series of LPFM installations at shelters, the Red Cross facility, at schools and our university could have been very helpful in the public interest during the past disasters.**

**Even during normal times LPFM would be useful at shopping centers, large hotels, tourist related services; schools and public services that need to reach the general public. On St. Thomas in one day you can count 7 cruise ships in the harbor with over 10,000 passengers. LPFM dockside would provide the ideal means to market tourist related products and information to cruiseship passengers. On St. John at the U.S National Park an LPFM radio assisted nature trail tour has many possibilities and would reduce the impact on the environment compared to alternate methods. With LPFM it would even be possible to broadcast gavel to gavel the proceedings of our territorial legislature, local court proceedings, civic and community meetings. Presently commercial radio can seldom commit to more than 20-second sound bites on the evening news of such an event and normally refuse any complete coverage because of so-called "commercial obligations". Shut-ins, senior citizens, and the handi-capped are now somewhat limited as to direct community involvement. LPFM could change this. More spectrum available for LPFM and even LPAM would equate to more choices, more diversity, and greater involvement among the community members. With LPFM even smaller ethnic groups in the Virgin Islands, such as over a thousand Palestinian-Americans and Haitian-Americans here could enjoy program services representative of their culture and language. LPFM narrowcasting would mean that diverse interest groups could have a better chance at meaningful radio services.**

**LPFM, if allowed to flourish with a minimum of federal regulations, will be a positive and beneficial project for which the framers of this policy will be proud of their association in making it all possible.**

**Commercial radio is big business today. This bigness now stifles creative growth and opportunities especially on the local level. The proliferation of "pirate" broadcasting today underscores the need for the FCC to allow the pastures to be re-seeded. This should be done, not to reward the practice of unlicensed radio, but rather to respond to an obvious new frontier.**

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